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Pornography Viewing Frequency: Associations with Sexual Preferences and Relationship Satisfaction Among College Men and Women

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Abstract

This study examined how viewing pornography has affected romantic relationships, sexual preferences, and relational trust for young men and women. Participants included 625 young adult college students. Participants completed questionnaires online. The questionnaire included questions about pornography viewing frequency, sexual attitudes, and relationship satisfaction and trust. The results indicated that there was a gender difference in usage, and that pornography viewing was associated with more erotic sexual preferences, less relationship satisfaction and less trust for one's dating partners. Though causality cannot be inferred, viewing pornography might be detrimental for young adults' dating relationship and result in specific sexual preferences.

Introduction

In the United States, 40 million adults regularly visit Internet pornography sites (Barry, Carroll, Madsen, Nelson, Olson, & Padilla-Walker, 2008). Studies show the most searched subject on the Internet is sex (Barry, et al., 2008). The pornography industry in 1972 was estimated to generate around 10 million dollars in revenue and in 1996 it peaked at 8 billion dollars a year (Hammerén & Johansson, 2007). Because of its availability, sexually explicit material is easily accessible in the United States (Knox, O'Reilly, & Zusman, 2007). Throughout the world, pornography has become easier to access with pay-per-view movies, personal computers with unlimited videos via the Internet, and magazines sold at various retailers (Barry, et al., 2008; Knox, et al., 2007).

Present Study

The purpose of this study is to identify how the amount of pornography being viewed is affecting participants' attitudes and relationships (i.e. sexual or overall satisfaction). Since present research has shown many differences in the amount of pornography viewed by males and females (Hald & Malamuth, 2008; Knox, et al., 2007) and because females tend to use different types of pornography (Johansson, et al., 2007), this study will focus on both males and females to identify where gender differences.

In this study, we were particularly interested in the frequency of pornography viewing paired with changes in sexual attitudes, relationship satisfaction, and trust.

Hypotheses

Hypothesis 1:

As sexual attitudes generally determine how we will treat others in an intimate relationship, we determined that participants, who do view pornography, will be more likely to endorse statements such as beauty requires effort and that woman are sex objects.

Hypothesis 2:

Sexual satisfaction and overall satisfaction in a relationship was hypothesized to be affected by the frequency participants' use pornography.

Hypothesis 3:

We have hypothesized that the more the participants' view pornography the more likely that they will be broken up with in their relationships.

Hypothesis 4:

As the amount of pornography viewed increases, the less likely the participants' will trust their current partner to be faithful.

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Methods

Participants

- General Psychology students at Boise State University
- 625 participants (258 males and 365 females)
- Average age of the participants was 20.10 ($SD = 3.43$)

Procedures

Students were recruited voluntarily using Experimentix, an online educational experimental system. Participants were given information about the questionnaire and chose to participate in this study for class credit. After giving consent, participants completed demographic information and a set of open-ended questions. Next, participants completed several different measures of relationship satisfaction and pornography viewing. The entire questionnaire took approximately 60 minutes.

Measures

For this study, we examined associations between male and female participants' reports of viewing pornography, relationship satisfaction, sexual attitudes, and lack of trust in relationships.

Relationship Satisfaction

To assess relationship satisfaction, participants' were asked, "How satisfied are you with your overall relationship?" Another item used to evaluate participants' relationship satisfaction was, "How satisfied are you with your sexual relationship?" For both of these items participants' responded on a 5-point scale (1 = *not at all satisfied*, 5 = *very satisfied*).

Sexual Attitudes

Two subscales were created to analyze sexual attitudes. The first subscale assessed participants' attitudes if beauty required effort. Some of the questions used for this subscale were, "A woman cannot expect to be beautiful unless she is willing to work at it," or, "It is difficult for a woman to be attractive unless she is skillful with make-up." The second subscale assessed the attitude that women are sex objects. Participants were asked questions such as, "Being with an attractive woman gives a man prestige," and, "There is nothing wrong with men being primarily interested in a woman's body." For the items above, participants' responded on a scale from 1 to 5 (1 = *Strongly Disagree*, 5 = *Always*).

Lack of Trust

Trust in one's dating partner was assessed through two questions. The first item was, "Do you believe your romantic partner will be faithful?" When evaluating which partner tended to end the relationship, each participant was asked, "Do you tend to be the one who gets broken up with in a relationship?" For both of the following items participants responded with a 5-point scale (1 = *Never*, 5 = *Always*).

Results

Pornography viewing and relationship satisfaction

- For male participants currently in a relationship, there was a negative correlation between current relationship satisfaction and pornography viewing ($r = -.24, p = .008$).
- For females, viewing pornography with a partner was positively correlated with sexual satisfaction in a current relationship ($r = .23, p = .006$).

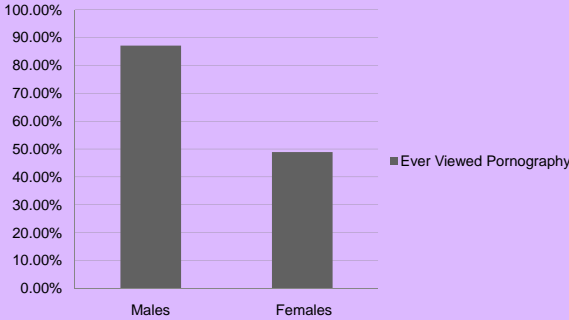
Pornography viewing and sexual attitudes

- A t-test revealed a significant difference between males who view pornography ($M = 3.18$) and those who do not ($M = 2.72$) regarding viewing women as sex objects $t(153) = 2.13, p = .03$.

Pornography viewing and lack of trust

- For males, there was a negative correlation between male participants viewing frequency and if they believe that their partner will be faithful ($r = -.20, p = .02$).

Gender & Pornography Viewing



Viewing & Relationships

Viewing Frequency

	Males	Females
Beauty Requires Effort	-.13 *	.08
Sexual Satisfaction	-.25**	-.02
Dating Satisfaction	-.24**	-.10
Trust	-.20*	-.06

Discussion

The purpose of this present study was to provide a glimpse into the differences between men and women and how pornography viewing frequency is associated with sexual attitudes, relationship satisfaction, and lack of trust. After running multiple analyses, there is evidence that reveals nine significant results within these three tested categories. First, we looked at both male and females to check the frequency of viewing pornography on either sex. Second, we examined the different questions for sexual attitudes, relationship satisfaction, and lack of trust to see if there was any significance with the variable of viewing pornography.

Limitations

For future research, the population needs to be broadened to the general population. This study is in the early stages, which makes the results not as detailed, and if this study would be replicated the results need to be dissected more. Because of the age-related trends between these college participants, a longitudinal study should be completed to see what changes take place in attitudes, relationships, and trust.